Dress for Success: Guidelines for Interviews and the Workplace

How important is your professional image - the way you look and present yourself?

In a word, VERY. Like it or not, most prospective employers will decide if you fit their organizational needs based on how you look and what you’re wearing. You get one chance to create a great first impression in an interview, so make it count.

Appropriate business dress can vary depending on the occupation, location and preference. But even if the work environment is casual, you should always dress professionally and conservatively for a job interview. Here are some guidelines to help you dress for success:

Men

- Tailored suit (solid color, such as navy or dark grey)
- Long-sleeved shirt (white or coordinated with the suit)
- Belt
- Tie (conservative color and pattern)
- Dark socks
- Conservative dress shoes
- Little or no jewelry (no earrings or other facial piercings)
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Neatly trimmed nails

Women

- Suit (solid color, such as navy or dark grey)
- Skirt should be long enough so that you can sit down comfortably
- Coordinated blouse
- Solid color shoes with conservative heels
- Limited jewelry (simple post earrings are acceptable; skip any other facial piercings)
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Light, neutral make-up
- Neatly manicured nails

If you are applying for a non-professional position or have a casual interview scheduled, dress neatly and conservatively as well. In these situations, men can choose khaki or dark pants (no jeans), a button down shirt and an optional tie. Women can wear a mid-length skirt or khakis, with a sweater or blouse.
Additional Tips

- When in doubt, always err on the dressier side. It's better to be over-than under-dressed.
- Don't wear heavy cologne, perfume or scented lotion.
- If you have tattoos, do not display them.
- Carry a portfolio or briefcase for your résumé, but avoid carrying anything else (purse, keys, etc.) so that you are free to shake hands.
- Make sure your pockets are empty (no bulges or jingling coins).
- Take a breath mint and use it before you enter the building.